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**From:** Flaherty, Rob EOP/WHO [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 4/23/2021 9:27:09 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]@fb.com]  
**Subject:** Research Suggestions

Here's the crux of their recs. Don't read this as White House endorsement of these suggestions (or, also, as the upper bound of what our thoughts on this might be). But – spirit of transparency -- this is circulating around the building and informing thinking.

## Facebook COVID-19 Vaccine Misinformation Brief

### Facebook plays a major role in the spread of COVID vaccine misinformation

- Supporting documents from research compiled by Media Matters, GQR, Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) and others overviews a range of mis-/dis-information narratives still circulating on Facebook and Facebook-owned properties like Instagram, as well as evasion tactics or deficiencies in detection efforts. Highlights include:
  - Failure to monitor events hosting anti-vaccine and COVID disinformation
  - Influencers, pages, and accounts who violate Facebook's policies and are removed or penalized can easily take their disinformation and agenda to one of their other account properties on the same platform or to their account on another Facebook owned platform like Instagram.
  - Coded language, misspellings, images, disappearing stories, direct to camera videos, and hashtag hijacking pushing dis/misinformation into public and closed spaces and attracting people into closed groups flooded with mis/disinformation
  - Directing attention to COVID-skeptics/anti-vaccine "trusted" messengers (doctors, gurus, celebrities, in-community experts) as well as Facebook groups masking their easily observed promotion of anti-vaccine disinformation
  - Non-English mis/disinformation circulating without moderation (Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, among others)
  - Given how mis/disinformation moves across borders, moderation failures in other country settings pose a risk to Americans as well. ISD reports evidence of the [global](#) threat that anti-vaccination disinformation and misinformation represents across languages and borders. [ISD research also highlighted](#) the threat that anti-vaccination disinformation on social media might have on real-world vaccination sites.

### Facebook's policy and enforcement gaps enable misinformation's spread

- 12 accounts are [responsible](#) for 73% of vaccine misinformation on Facebook. Transparent, progressively severe penalties (similar to those in Twitter's [civic integrity](#) policy) and comprehensive enforcement for pages, accounts, and groups that repeatedly post COVID vaccine misinformation would effectively promote behavior change and affect only a small number of accounts. Bans for COVID-19 misinformation should be cross-platform and enforced at the entity-level, not the account level.
- Even if Facebook thinks anti-vaccine disinformers have successfully skirted its rules to avoid deplatforming, the company is under no obligation to distribute or amplify anti-vaccine or vaccine-hesitant propaganda in News Feed or in group recommendations. Incorporating objective signals of source authority into News Feed for health content, like Facebook's previously deployed [News Ecosystem Quality](#) scores--would significantly reduce the reach of low-quality

domains used by [prominent anti-vaxxers](#). Similarly, Facebook should end group recommendations for groups with a history of COVID-19 or vaccine misinformation.

- Vaccine misinformation monitoring and enforcement must adjust as disinformers evade enforcement with coded language and must be robust in languages beyond English. Research from [Media Matters](#) and Equality Labs suggests non-English-speaking diaspora communities are disproportionately subjected to dangerous COVID-19 and vaccine related disinformation. Facebook should direct resources to equal policy enforcement around violative content and networks in non-English languages.
- Warning screens before linking to domains known to promote vaccine misinformation would dissuade users from following links to off-platform misinformation and hurt the vaccine-misinformation business model Facebook enables.

**Rob Flaherty**

Director of Digital Strategy

The White House

Cell: [REDACTED]